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to some must impair, to others utterly destroy, its attraction. If he is one of those who feel no respect for prevailing sentiments in matters of taste, he may persist in his own way, which, as it is now, will not lead him to a throne in men's minds and hearts. But if he will pay deference to established modes of communication, which, though they might be improved, are, at present, the only channels through which extensive influence can be exerted, he may gain for himself a brilliant reputation, and, what is more to his purpose, he may be a powerful and successful instrument for bringing about those reforms which he evidently has at heart, and which will be triumphantly accomplished in happier days than ours.

ART. VI. — 1. *Biographical, Literary, and Philosophical Essays, contributed to the Eclectic Review.* By JOHN FOSTER, Author of Essays on Decision of Character, Popular Ignorance, and Christian Morals. New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1844. 12mo. pp. 419.

2. *Miscellaneous Essays on Christian Morals, Experimental and Practical.* Originally delivered as Lectures in the Broadmead Chapel, Bristol, England. By JOHN FOSTER. New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1844. 12mo. pp. 252.

AT the latest glimpse that we can get of the distinguished author whose name has drawn our attention to the above-mentioned publications, we find him an infirm, retired octogenarian, long, gaunt, and ghastly, careless and slovenly in dress, with a countenance deeply furrowed by a life of intense thought, and indicating great mental vigor and rigid inflexibility of character. He was revered and cherished as the last of a constellation of luminaries, that had for half a century or more shed lustre on the previously obscure and overshadowed denomination of Particular or Calvinistic Baptists. He, too, has now gone to his rest; and, as his finished life and testimony pass to be matters of record and history, we avail ourselves of the opportunity to present such imperfect sketches of his person and character as we can obtain, and to de-

scribe that compact and strongly marked individuality which has so stamped itself upon his works, as to give us, in the least of them, a perfect daguerrotype of the man.

John Foster was, we believe, born in Bristol, was educated at the Baptist Academy there, and spent most of his days in that city or its vicinity. He entered in early life upon the clerical profession, but was never a popular, or, to a promiscuous audience, even an endurable preacher. He was two or three times settled, either over very small societies, or over congregations that dwindled rapidly under his ministrations. His failure as a public teacher was to be ascribed, in part, to the uncompromising rigidity of his character, which forbade his becoming "all things to all men," even in that apostolic and Christian sense in which these much abused words were first used, — and in part to great personal awkwardness, and to feeble and unadorned elocution; though, as a speaker, he is said, by his skilful and graphic emphasis, to have exercised the power, denied to his *vivâ voce* readers, of rendering his own cumbrous and clumsy sentences intelligible to a patient hearer. He was fond of the company of intellectual men, and conversed with animation and interest on high themes; but in ordinary social and domestic intercourse was, in early and middle life, austere and stern, commanding more reverence than love. His own household are said to have regarded him with a distant veneration amounting almost to awe; and a domestic picture given of him by a visiter some twenty years ago reminded us of our own Jonathan Edwards, who dined in state from silver, while his household cowered around his table over pewter. But later informants, who have seen him in his bereaved and diminished family, represent him as not insensible to the amenities, or unobservant of the courtesies, that make home graceful and happy. Thus the hard, crabbed fruit, which the summer sun cannot ripen, grows mellow as the oblique rays of autumn reach it through thinned and withered foliage. Possessed of a moderate competence, sufficient for his frugal tastes and habits, he lived for many of his last years in retirement, from which he emerged only when solicited for special services, occasionally preaching *ad interim* in a vacant church, and now and then delivering courses of lectures to an evening audience composed of the cultivated and spiritual from the various denominations in Bristol. He had, it is said, of late, even used

his pen with growing reluctance, and this, not from indolence or inactivity, but because he had identified himself with the notions and sentiments of a vanished generation, had been a *laudator temporis acti se puero*, and had grudgingly bestowed his services, as a censor and castigator, on those novelties in literature, philosophy, and theology for which he deemed silent "preterition" the most worthy treatment. He continued, however, to contribute not infrequently to the Eclectic Review till near the close of 1839, having been intimately associated with the founders of that journal, and sympathizing strongly with the theological views which have uniformly characterized it.

Foster was a Calvinist of the old school as to his theological opinions; and his opinions were all theological. He took cognizance, indeed, of a wide diversity of subjects, but viewed them only in their religious aspects and relations. His general knowledge was great, and his learning accurate and profound; but every thing, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, was tried by the unelastic standard of his own creed. His literary criticisms often remind us of the trite, yet undoubtedly fabulous, anecdote of the Caliph Omar's decision of the fate of the Alexandrian Library, — "What accords with the Koran is superfluous, what differs from it harmful." He is much more shocked by the false doctrine, than edified by the poetical genius, of Homer and Virgil, and evidently ascribes to their great works a stronger hold upon opinion and sentiment in modern times, than they could have had even in the classic ages. He cannot tolerate so much as a metaphor drawn from mythology or fable, and manifests the same horror at the cursory introduction of the name of a heathen deity by way of ornament to a Christian poem, which he might have been expected to show, had the Broadmead Chapel been converted into a Pantheon, and the statue of Jupiter Tonans erected in his own frequent place in its pulpit. Of course, the moral tone of all his writings is pure and lofty. His ethics are eminently Christian as to their positive side; but they lack the breadth and catholicity of the Christian standard. They omit all the æsthetic aspects of virtue. They give but narrow scope and reluctant tolerance to those innocent amenities of domestic and social life, of literature and art, which grow in the most luxuriant beauty under true Christian culture. His morality would be repre-

sented by a rigid code, formed of precise precepts, stated and defined with logical accuracy, and bristling all over with stern penalties, rather than by a pervading, plastic spirit of devotion and humanity, multiform in its manifestations, and blending with all that is graceful and beautiful in nature and in life.

While all his works are characteristic of the author, the Essay on Decision of Character, which has had, we believe, wider circulation than any of his writings, bears pre-eminently the shape and pressure of his mind and heart. It is a condensed and generalized autobiography. In every form and hue, he is the man he paints, inflexible to evil, firmly just, rigidly true, but cold and statue-like, deeming every sweet voice a Siren's song, every pleasant form an incarnation of the great adversary, all tempting fruit apples of Sodom. He shows a strait and narrow path, which manifestly leads to heaven ; but nowhere on the road has he planted "instead of the thorn the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle." He treats with little respect the gentler elements of character, and deems their absence hardly a defect. Severe resolve, tenacious purpose, intense, yet quiet energy, under the control of a conscience incorruptible and unslumbering, — these with him make up the perfect character ; and it matters little, if, in developing the hardier sinews of the moral man, the lines of beauty be all marred, and the cords of finer feeling broken or unstrung.

The same exclusive spirit runs through the powerfully written Essay on the Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion. The author here represents all ancient and modern literature as arrayed in an almost unbroken phalanx against religious faith and reverence, so that one can become conversant with the intellectual achievements of his race only at the risk of indifference or unbelief as to the most momentous of all truths. The ancient poets are condemned and their influence deprecated, because they had not anticipated the disclosures of the New Testament ; while most modern works of taste and fancy are represented as hostile to religion, solely because they are not distinctively religious. Even Addison and Johnson, clear and emphatic as were their recognitions of the divinity and authority of the Christian revelation, are harshly censured for what they left unwritten. Our author, however, strangely enough, pronoun-

ces Milton's genius angelic, and says that it "might have shamed to silence the Muses of paganism," from whom he drew at least as much inspiration as from "Siloa's brook." But the sombre character of much of Milton's machinery, and the prominence throughout his great epic of giant impersonations of sin, and death, and woe, seem to have found so congenial a lodgment in the stern and awful mood of Foster's own mind, as to have blinded him to the pagan moulds in which so much of the imagery of the Paradise Lost is run, and the pagan conceptions with Christian names to be traced on almost every page. The only other works of taste (some of them so called only by the broadest courtesy) specified as worthy a Christian's perusal are "part of the poetical works of Young" (not all, for in another connection his Busiris is castigated), and those of Cowper and Watts. Other reading is not, indeed, expressly forbidden; but the obvious implication is, that one can turn over the leaves of the Spectator or the Rambler only at the peril of his soul, and that, if one will be daring enough to encounter Pope's Essay on Man, he must flank it by double portions of the Night Thoughts or the Task, by way of antidote.

But when all due abatements are made, Foster has great and manifold merits as a moralist. No sophistry ever warps his judgment in favor of fashionable folly or vice, of wrongs that have age or high precedent on their side, of those sins that wear good names and put on virtuous pretences. He rebukes moral evil in all its forms with unyielding severity, and often in tones of solemn, fearful irony, that remind us of those old Hebrew seers who confronted alone the congregated hosts of idolaters. He is thoroughly versed in the morbid anatomy of the soul. He sends his probe, through festering flesh and shrinking sinews, deep into the gangrene; he ferrets out the latent disease in its last lurking-place, and lays it bare with the keenest of blades and the coolest of hands. His pathology is perfect; he describes the remotest, faintest symptoms of unhealthy moral action, and traces them through every subterfuge to the vicious principle whence they take their rise. He deals unsparingly with that whole prolific brood of vain thoughts and idle reveries, which give birth to all the overt forms of sin. We doubt whether there be a human being so perfect as not to feel self-convicted, and to be stung with self-reproach, by his pungent

appeals to the heart and conscience. And, while thus thorough in the analysis of moral evil, he is no less so in the synthesis. He traces up the springs of wrong thought and action to their fountain. Sin is in his system one and indivisible. Its essence is the unsubmissive will, the disobedient heart. It is rebellion against the rightful authority of the Supreme Being. To the degree to which it exists, it indicates nonreconciliation with his will, a lack of harmony with his spirit. It is multiform, indeed, in its forthputtings, because its outward occasions and incitements are infinitely varied ; but from these it derives its shape, not its nature, as the same fountain may rise and fall in jets of countless diversity, according to the form and position of the pipes through which it plays. This oneness of moral evil suggests the need of uniformity in its remedial treatment. The healing branch is to be cast, not into this or that remote stream, but into the fountain. The remedy is not to be applied to isolated bad habits ; but to the general current of the thoughts and the affections. Reformation must work from within outward. It must end, not begin, in detail. The soul must be brought into harmony with God, the will must be made submissive, the affections must be fixed on worthy and enduring objects ; and then, and no sooner, will the outward life assume the true " beauty of holiness."

We have hinted at Foster's two chief faults as a moralist. We desire now to state them with emphasis, and to make them the subject of a few general remarks. The first is his one-sided exhibition of the sanctions of morality. He dwells mainly on the penalties and woes of guilt, and seldom holds forth virtue's crown to view, never exhibits its separate jewels, as they sparkle in the sunlight of eternity. He relies on terror as his chief motive power. His works are barren of appeals to the affections. It is true, he sometimes makes mention of mercy, joy, and heaven ; but he uses them as one uses algebraic signs in the solution of a problem, without developing or interpreting them. They seem to represent to his mind dogmas rather than facts. They are parts of the symbolic formula, not the subjects of habitual and glowing meditation. But the great spiritual facts which he expends his whole energy in exhibiting are lugubrious facts, the windings and fatal issues of depravity, the torments of a guilty conscience, the horrors of an impending eternity. In

fine, a cold, stern, sword-bearing legality occupies the whole foreground of his ethical representations.

We maintain that such views are not adapted to make men better. It is not enough that they have a faithful mirror held before them. They may know themselves, and yet lack strength for self-improvement. They may abhor themselves, and yet from very impotency remain unchanged. The affections are the great motive power in the moral universe. Law is vain without love. It is so in the domestic circle, that miniature of the great family of man. Strict commands, severe restrictions, backed by unfailing penalties, of themselves train up only stubborn, rebellious children, whose chief ambition is to reach those years when they can throw off the yoke, and indulge passions and appetites which have grown fierce beneath restraint. But surround a family with an atmosphere of kindness, make home a paradise, connect constant enjoyment and the omnipresence of parental tenderness with obedient and submissive childhood, and you can then enforce strict law, and make children love its yoke; no commandments will seem grievous, no needed restraints burdensome. Obedience will transcend precept, and anticipate command. We have observed the same contrasts in the workings of different public ministrations of moral and religious truth. We have known teachers of Christian duty, who were thorough and powerful in their casuistry, bold and fearless in rebuke, close and anatomizing in their exhibitions of character, who have produced but little effect, because threats and denunciations were their chief instruments. We have known others, even too lax and indulgent in their own views of society, and lame and imperfect in their analysis of principles and motives, who yet have trained those under their influence to lofty and discriminating virtue by their beautiful portraitures of moral excellence, by the cheerful, hopeful tone in which they have encouraged every true aspiration and worthy effort, by the atmosphere of love and of heaven which they have thrown around the path of duty. Terror has, indeed, its essential place and ministry; but it is auxiliary and subordinate to higher principles. It can never do even its own work alone. The inspired apostle said, — "By the terrors of the Lord we *persuade* men." And its only office is at the outposts of virtue. There, and early, it resigns its subject to the gentler guidance of mercy, trust, and love.

Our other leading objection to Foster as a moralist concerns not the degree, but the way, in which he applies Christian ideas as the universal standard of taste, literature, speech, and conduct. We are inclined to recognize no other standard. We look to Christianity as affording æsthetic maxims, literary canons, and fundamental principles in science, no less than rules of conscientious living. But Christianity, so far from being the exclusive principle which our author makes it, is in our view eminently catholic. In matters of taste, it directs our contemplations not merely to an awful potentate and judge, but to a joy-giving Father, manifesting himself in numberless forms of beauty, and ministering from the fulness of his love to every finer sensibility of our natures. The universe, as it unfolds itself to the Christian eye, presents no marks of coarse and narrow utilitarianism. Thus we have not merely the light requisite for vision ; but that light is broken into rays of exquisite beauty, and beams upon us in endless delightful combinations, from the crimson sunset, the silver moon, and the stars of differing glory, from the summer rainbow and the variegated clouds of autumn, from winter fields of dazzling snow and icy stalactites hung thick on every tree. Not only does the earth bear food convenient for us, but that food springs up and ripens in the fairest and most attractive forms ; in the yellow wheat-sheaf, and the purple festoonery of the vine, and the deep-blushing peach, while the forest wears its gay robe of praise, and the wayside flower, made only to be admired, invites taste to become the handmaid of devotion. Water, too, is given not merely in thirst-sufficing wells, but it flows in meandering streams, and gushes in sparkling fountains, and mirrors back from its broad, transparent surface the glorious face of heaven. On these aspects of nature the divine Founder of our religion has set his frequent sanction ; they suggested many of his richest lessons of faith and trust. Nor was he insensible to artificial forms of taste. He spurned none of the lesser amenities of social and domestic life. He opened his ministry by helping out the scanty entertainment of the marriage-feast ; and, at its close, he suffered not the costly offering of hospitality to be sold for eleemosynary uses. We deem ourselves, therefore, only reverently copying from him who has made, and him who has owned, "every thing beautiful in its season," when we

cherish elegant arts and seek out forms of beauty ; when we go beyond what is absolutely essential, and adorn this outward life with whatever can make home attractive, or hospitality graceful, or social intercourse genial and refined. We believe that the susceptibility to outward beauty is of the highest moral significance and worth. It multiplies points of contact between the works of God and the soul of man. It furnishes an avenue through which the noblest powers and affections may be reached and moved. It is essential, also, to the respectability and influence of moral goodness. Ascetic, tasteless piety may be sincere and fervent ; but it lives and dies for itself, and cannot reproduce its own image. But where purity of heart and life appears in close affinity with all that is beautiful in nature and art, it cannot fail to be admired and imitated.

We would also maintain, with Foster, that all literature is to be judged on Christian principles and by Christian standards. But we would not therefore, with him, pronounce all literature pernicious, or, at best, useless, that is not technically religious, and crowded to the utmost of its capacity with devotional thought. He himself evidently was no mean scholar in profane literature ; and we can see how his wide range of classical erudition contributed to the course of mental gymnastics which made him one of the most powerful reasoners and accomplished moralists of the age. As well might we expect a treatise of geometry to intersperse homilies with its demonstrations, or an exposition of the differential calculus to have pious maxims for its foot-notes, as that every effusion of fancy, every graceful essay, every æsthetic disquisition, should be fraught with the appropriate materials for sermons and Sabbath hymns. Good Dr. Watts sometimes wrote epigrams and lines on "Phyllis playing with a Parrot." Milton made versions from Terence, Ovid, and Catullus, and Cowper translated the Iliad ; though Foster expresses much indignation at Sir William Jones for rendering into English certain hymns to Hindoo divinities, and asks, — "Should not a worshipper of God hold himself under a solemn obligation to abjure all tolerance of even poetical figures that can seriously seem, in any way whatever, to recognize the pagan divinities, or abominations, as the prophets of Jehovah would have called them ? What would Elijah have said to such an employment of talents in his time ?"

To us the literature of all nations and ages seems worthy of research, even on strictly religious grounds, and we believe it may conduce to the highest results in the formation of principle and character. Literature is the soul of history, and God writes all history. The literature of a nation at any epoch represents at one view its culture and its character, its theology and its ethics, its degree of intrinsic purity and of outward prosperity, what it has done for itself, and what fortunes a pervading and retributive Providence has brought upon it. We thus trace in active operation those universal moral laws which determine with equal certainty the fate of individuals and the destiny of governments and empires.

For ourselves, we never feel more impressively the necessity, worth, and divinity of the Christian revelation, than in reading the authors of ancient Greece and Rome, whether those who, by an unwarrantable hyperbole, have been termed almost Christian, or those who give us a clear insight into the corruption and depravity of their times. We see at work in the Periclean and the Augustan age every terrestrial element of culture, the accumulated experience of ages, the most beautiful forms of art, eloquence which will echo to the end of time, profound philosophy, wise legislation. And yet there was no one sound and healthful principle that ruled in social and domestic life, no moral law whatever that was not oftener disowned in the breach than honored in the observance, no form of impurity or oppression which had not its open advocates and its unrestrained manifestations; and, as ancient civilization removed its seat westward, and its second metropolis became the capital city of the world, its empire rushed to destruction by the toppling weight of its giant vices, which gained new vastness of hideous form with every accession of wealth and refinement. Nor do we less discern the need of supernatural interposition, when we turn to the more sober pages of the truly wise and good men of their day, and see them grappling despairingly with questions which a Christian child can solve from his first catechism, — groping in hopeless doubt among the fundamental principles of ethics, — tracking their blind way from polytheism to conceptions varied only by the degrees in which the pantheistic or atheistic element preponderated, — Socrates, as impersonated in the Phædon, cautioning himself against an over-

confident belief in immortality, — Aristotle sanctioning infanticide, — Cicero by turns owning and ridiculing "the powers of the world to come," — Seneca defacing his beautiful moral treatises by the deification of Cato and the praise of suicide. There is too much of sacred truth to be enforced, too vast a body of Christian evidence to be illustrated, from these sources, for them to be lightly estimated in the training of the Christian scholar. Let his early religious lessons be faithfully given and meekly taken, and we fear not contamination from vice which appears on the classic record in all its grossness, nor do we fear that the faint and flickering luminaries of paganism will outshine in his eye the sunlight that rose over the hills of Bethlehem.

But the use of certain portions of literature, ancient or modern, and the moral verdict to be passed upon them, are entirely different questions. In answering the latter question, however, the spirit of Christianity would suggest a broad catholicism. It cannot, indeed, admit within its canon works of ancient genius redolent with all the vileness of their times, and written by men who in their own lives violated the obvious dictates of conscience and laws of natural decency. But as in the Mosaic cosmogony light existed before the sun, — in scattered rays and hazy lustre, before it enshrined itself in one vast central urn, — so the divine Spirit had ever dwelt and spoken in the world, though in clouded glory and dark oracles, till it became incarnate in Judea. And wherever its utterances were listened to and waited for with reverence and love, wherever the soul fervently sought what light there was and yearned for more, there we have the record of pure thoughts and lofty aspirations, the foreshadowing of great truths, and instructive views of humanity in its dependence and its neediness. We regard authors of this class as having been faithful to their mission, and worthy the veneration of all succeeding times ; and we violate every law of Christian equity, when we judge them by the light which had not dawned upon them, but towards whose faint day-spring we often see them turned in the posture of waiting suppliants.

As to modern literature, we have a right to demand, that, whatever it be, it be positively Christian. But we regard this condition as fulfilled, in different classes of composition, by very different embodiments of religious ideas. It should depend on the scope and end of the work, whether these

ideas shall remain out of distinct view, and tacitly give shape, hue, and tone to thought and style,— whether they shall gracefully blend and alternate with less elevated conceptions and images, — or whether they alone shall stand out in *alto-relievo*. The latter undoubtedly should be the case, where direct religious instruction or edification is the object. On the other hand, in works of mere fancy, in descriptive poetry, in elegant fiction, the first of these modes of treatment is, we think, most true to the sensitive nature, and productive of the highest uses. A devout man, in viewing a beautiful landscape with a friend, does not express his spontaneous admiration and delight in religious phraseology. His words are descriptive only of sensations and emotions appropriate to the scene, while these are underlaid and made keen and glowing by grateful, adoring thoughts, too deep and full for utterance. Why should written poetry follow any other law? The Jews never uttered the holiest of names; and we like sometimes to have it left unspoken or unwritten. When it is the source of inspiration, it always makes itself perceived and felt by the reader, and often the more impressively because left to be implied. What Christian criticism should require of this whole class of literature is, that it be true to the laws of nature and of mind, that it shed over the souls of its readers the spirit of reverence and of love, that it render unfailing homage to the intrinsic majesty of virtue, that it chime in with the harmony of the outward universe, that it breathe a courageous, trustful spirit for the toils and conflicts of life. Where these high ends are met and answered, if we have also the *ipsissima verba* of faith and piety without cant or Pharisaism, we will be thankful for them; yet no less thankful, where we recognize the handwriting of devotion and humanity without their formal signature.

But there is a large class of writings not nominally religious, in which we contend that religious truths and sentiments should be expressly recognized. We refer to the whole multiform class of didactic writings, from the voluminous history or grave ethical treatise, down to the periodical essay or the discourse for a political or literary anniversary. The object of every such work is the development or illustration of truth on some one of those numerous subjects which are commonly called secular, but which present widely different aspects, according as they are beheld in their

outward relations and bearings, or are referred to religious principles and standards. On all these subjects Christianity is to be regarded as the central light, and in the treatment of them should never be suppressed or veiled. There is no topic of intellectual or practical interest, on which the concentration of religious wisdom is not the chief thing needful. But this should always be so conducted as to keep the ostensible subject still the real one, and to confine religion to that ancillary place in which she most truly manifests her sovereignty. Thus the higher lessons of truth and duty will insinuate themselves where more direct religious teachings would be spurned; while devout but narrow minds will be led to take cognizance of a wider range of subjects, and to apply heavenly wisdom to earthly themes, and eternal truth to the current affairs of life. The writer whose aims are the very highest must also consult the capacity of his public, as the divine Teacher "spoke the truth as men were able to bear."

Foster complains of the indirect and general way in which Addison and Johnson, themselves professed advocates of Christianity, saw fit to introduce religious subjects in the Spectator and the Rambler. Had they followed the course that he would have pointed out for them, they would have overshot their mark, and contributed only to the edification of the pious, not to the popular literature of their day. "One can imagine," says Foster, "with what a perfect storm of ridicule Addison would have been greeted, on entering one of his celebrated coffee-houses of wits, on the day after he should have published in the Spectator a paper, for instance, on the necessity of being devoted to the service of Jesus Christ." Now, what would bring down "a perfect storm of ridicule" was precisely what Addison ought not to have sent into those same "coffee-houses of wits," if he had taken counsel of the Master, who said, — "Cast ye not your pearls before swine." There are moral conditions, as there are certain bodily diseases, which reject counteracting remedies, but yield to an alterative treatment. And such was the regimen applied to the tastes and habits of the higher classes in England by the essayists of the eighteenth century, and especially, as it seems to us, by Addison in the Spectator. We can hardly turn to one of his papers which presents not a worthy moral aim; nor can we remember so

much as a single concession to the reigning infidelity, irreligion, and vice of the portion of the public which he sought to reach. But he fought corruption with its own weapons. Wit had been deemed the boon companion of inebriety and blasphemy ; he turned its keenest shafts against its sworn confederates. Playfulness of style, piquant turns of expression, raillery, and banter had been identified with free-thinking and licentious principles of action ; with unsurpassed tact, he wheeled round this corps of light-artillery to the advocacy of pure morality and true religion. Elegant learning and affluent classical allusions had been brought to point attacks against the holiest duties and interests of humanity ; he employed them in the defence of domestic purity and social virtue and ancestral piety. By the sprightliness and wit of his first five papers of each week, covering the ground of fashionable dissipation and frivolity, he obtained an entrance for his beautiful Saturday lucubrations into many a coffee-room and breakfast-room, whence they alone would have been excluded for their savour of pietism. And, in those Saturday papers, how modestly and gracefully were the great themes of religion forced upon unwilling readers, by a *naiveté* which they could not resist, and an air of sincere conviction which they could not ward off from their own consciences ! There the claims of devotion, the duty of gratitude, the divine presence in nature, the rich eloquence and sublime poetry of the sacred writings are illustrated with a calm, contemplative solemnity and fervor, such as few professedly religious writers have equalled, and none surpassed ; while the devotional poetry scattered through those papers has won for itself a cherished place in the sanctuary service with every sect in Great Britain and America. Nor can we fail to trace the happy agency of Addison and his fellow-essayists in putting an end to the generation of infidel and scoffing wits, and in turning the current of English literature from the corrupt streams in which it had long flowed into more healthful channels, so that the tone of sentiment which had been deemed inseparable from liberal culture and elegant writing has since been tolerated by no *clique* or faction which could give laws to taste, or prescribe standards to criticism.

But it is time that we returned to the author whose name has given the text for our perhaps too desultory discussion. We have said but little of his style. We can best describe

it by saying that it is eminently his own, and could have belonged to no man unmarked by his special idiosyncrasies. It is strong and nervous, but unadorned and harsh. His sentences are close and compact, but heavy and inharmonious. They are crammed brimful of meaning, but the sense exceeds the form, and lies crowded around the grammatical members in shapeless masses. There is no tautology, no redundancy of phrase ; but he heaps between two periods materials enough for a paragraph, and wedges in every subject and predicate and object of a proposition with qualifying terms, exceptions, undesignated parentheses, and supplementary augments, till the plethoric sentence can hold no more. He had no imagination ; and he supposes a like destitution in his reader, leaving nothing for him to supply, trusting no inferences or corollaries to his discrimination. He has no forms of introduction, transition, or conclusion. He seizes the heart of his subject in his first sentence ; and drops it, as if weary and disgusted, the moment he has exhausted its marrow. He has not even the skill requisite for the decent division of his larger works, but often enters upon a new chapter or letter (for this last is a favorite name with him, though without the epistolary form) where there is no apparent reason for breaking a paragraph. His gold is neither refined, beaten, nor stamped ; but given out in the ore, in bars of suitable length, chopped off against the vein, with broken crystals cleaving to the fractures. And yet there is less dross in his ore than alloy in most of the current coin of the literary realm.

With all his gravity, Foster had a great deal of wit. But we doubt whether he knew it. We can conceive him as having written his most humorous paragraphs without a smile mounting to his lips, or even playing around his *præcordia*. Indeed, he is so unconscious of aught except the weighty purpose for which he writes, that irony and ridicule never make his periods less heavy, or divest them of the didactic form. He has no playfulness ; but his very wit is grim and sad, like that of Elijah when he scoffed at the priests of Baal. It grows not from a feeling of the ludicrous, but from a singularly keen sense of incongruity. His canons of taste and rules of judgment on all subjects were few, distinct, simple, and unbending, — sound and just individually, but not so combined, extended, or modified as to be fairly applicable to

a tithe of the departments of thought on which he brought his mind to bear. Consequently he often exhibited the grotesque spectacle of ideas and standards mutually incommensurable, stretched side by side, and tortured into a juxtaposition from which they shrink. In fine, his own mind presents an outline so angular, jagged, and sharp-pronged, as to force into the most eccentric shapes whatever comes into sufficiently close contact with it to take its form ; and what he cannot mould by pressure he impales on those same sharp prongs, and deliberately tears and tosses it with angry sarcasm and bitter railing.

The first of the two volumes named at the head of this article is an American reprint of *twenty*, from an English collection of *fifty-nine*, of Foster's articles in the Eclectic Review. Not having seen the English volumes, we cannot pronounce decisively as to the judiciousness of the selection ; but the articles in the volume before us are all of them strong, characteristic, and possessed of a value independent of the occasion that called them forth ; and most of them are on persons and subjects that occupy a prominent and enduring place in the general eye. The most elaborate article in the volume is that on Coleridge's Friend. To this is appended the close of a review of Cottle's Recollections of Coleridge, from which we extract the following just criticism on Coleridge's obscurities of thought and style.

" There may be those who, from patient attention, great effort, and unusual mental strength in making that effort, have the consciousness of a satisfactory understanding of the tenor of his speculations. They could perhaps give them back, point by point, in language of their own. But assuredly a very great proportion of his readers, of at least moderate and not unexercised intellect, find themselves grievously at a loss in parts, and unsuccessful on the whole. There has, indeed, been no little affectation in the matter. Not a few, aware of the writer's great fame, unwilling to seem deficient in capacity, and perhaps really admiring particular parts of his works, have concealed their consciousness of being often baffled in the study under a dissembling show of applause, while they would have shrunk from the test of having to state the exact import of what they had read.

" For one thing, it is quite obvious that Coleridge, after setting before his readers the theme, the *one* theme apparently, undertaken to be elucidated, could not, or would not, proceed in a straightforward course of explanation, argument, and appropri-

ate illustration from fancy; keeping in sight before him a certain ultimate object; and placing marks, as it were, of the steps and stages of the progress. He takes up a topic which we much desire to see examined, a question which we should be glad to see disposed of, and begins with good promise in preparatory observations; but, after a short advance, the train of discussion appears to lose or abandon its direction; veers off arbitrarily, or at the call of accident; complicates what should be the immediate question with secondary, relative, or even quite foreign matters; arrests itself, perhaps, in a philological dissertation on a particular term that comes in the way; resumes, nominally, at an interval, the leading purpose; but with a ready propensity to stray again into any collateral track, and thence into the next, and the next; till at last we come out as from an enchanted wood; hardly knowing whither, and certainly not knowing how to retrace the mazy course; having seen, it is true, divers remarkable objects, and glimpses to a distance on either hand; but not having obtained the one thing which we imagined we were conducted to pursue. When we have asked ourselves, Now what is the result, as to the purpose we started with in such excellent company? we could not tell.

"We have sometimes felt as if our instructer were playing the necromancer with us; causing shapes of intelligence to come before us as if ready to reveal the secrets we were inquiring about; but making them vanish when they were opening the semblance of a mouth; again bringing them or others, grave and bearded, or of more pleasant visage; and when they are getting into hopeful utterance, presto, they are gone. Or perchance, if sometimes permitted to say on, it may happen that they emit such an oracle that we are in danger of muttering, after a pause, 'There needeth no ghost to tell us that.'

. . . . .

"Not a little of the obscurity complained of may be owing to the strange dialect which he fabricated for himself, partly of his own invention, and partly from the German terminology; which never will or can be naturalized in English literature, whatever efforts are making, or to be made, to deprave our language with it, — an impossibility at which, as plain Englishmen, we sincerely rejoice. If the *greater part* of the philosophy, for which it was constructed as the vehicle, shall keep its distance too, so much the better. That inseparable vehicle itself will debar it (and Coleridge is a proof) from all chance of extensive acceptance.

"Notwithstanding all these animadversions, it were little better than an impertinence to say that his writings (we make no

reference to the beauties of his poetry) contain, though unfortunately in such a scattered miscellaneous disorder, very much that is admirable and valuable. There are acute and just discriminations, profound reflections, sagacious conjectures, and felicitous images, without number. In portions and passages, no professed disciple can admire him more than we do.

"It is cause for great regret, that a mind so powerful, original, and amply furnished should have been withheld, by a combination of causes, including those of which we have attempted a slight indication, from taking that primary rank in philosophy and literature, for which nature seemed to have designed it. We have not the means to know what may have been the effect and extent of his influence in the secondary mode, of his personal communications with many able men. But as regarded solely in the capacity of an author, he is (hitherto) one of the most remarkable instances in history, of the disproportion between splendid talents and success, in the ordinary sense of success, with the cultivated portion of the public." — pp. 109 – 112.

We have in this volume several biographical articles, remarkable for their comprehensiveness, keen insight, and independence of judgment. There is a sketch of the life and character of Benjamin Franklin, singularly candid and generous in its estimate of his worth, free from the national bigotry which prevents so many Englishmen from acknowledging Transatlantic greatness and merit, and displaying quite an intimate acquaintance with the condition and history of our country, in which, we are told, he always manifested a deep interest. We have also sketches of David Hume, James Beattie, and Hugh Blair. The two last fare little better in his hands than the first. Beattie, to be sure, was Hume's antagonist as a defender of the Christian miracles ; but his piety had too much of the æsthetic, and too little of the ascetic, element for Foster's severe standard. He was too much of a conformist to secular fashion, and too closely identified with the elegances and luxuries of literary life, to receive more than the scantiest justice from one whose ideal of character could have found its full embodiment only by the exhumation of a Scotch Covenanter. And as for Blair, it was enough that he was an associate and friend of Hume, an exceedingly smooth preacher, and a Christian teacher without ever being known to bear the cross. We quote the following severe, yet, for the most part, just, remarks on Blair's sermons, the excessive popularity of which some of our

older readers well remember, while they are now passing out of knowledge.

"A reflective reader will perceive his mind fixed in a wonderful sameness of feeling throughout a whole volume: it is hardly relieved a moment, by surprise, delight, or labor, and at length becomes very tiresome; perhaps a little analogous to the sensations of a Hindoo while fulfilling his vow to remain in one certain posture for a month. A sedate formality of manner is invariably kept up through a thousand pages, without the smallest danger of ever luxuriating into a beautiful irregularity. We never find ourselves in the midst of any thing that reminds us of nature, except by that orderly stiffness which she forswears; or of freedom, except by being compelled to go in the measured paces of a dull procession. If we manfully persist in reading on, we at length feel a torpor invading our faculties, we become apprehensive that some wizard is about turning us into stones, and we can break the spell only by shutting the book. Having shut the book, we feel that we have acquired no definable addition to our ideas; we have little more than the consciousness of having passed along through a very regular series of sentences and unexceptionable propositions; much in the same manner as, perhaps, at another hour of the same day, we have the consciousness or remembrance of having just passed along by a very regular painted palisade, no one bar of which particularly fixed our attention, and the whole of which we shall soon forget that we have ever seen.

"The last fault that we shall allege is some defect on the ground of religion; not a deficiency of general seriousness, nor an infrequency of reference to the most solemn subjects, nor an omission of stating sometimes, in explicit terms, the leading principles of the theory of the Christian redemption. But we repeatedly find cause to complain, that, in other parts of the sermon, he appears to forget these statements, and advances propositions which, unless the reader shall combine with them modifications which the author has not suggested, must contradict the principles. On occasions, he clearly deduces from the death and atonement of *Christ* the hopes of futurity, and consolations against the fear of death; and then, at other times, he seems most cautious to avoid this grand topic, when adverting to the approach of death, and the feelings of that season; and seems to rest all the consolations on the review of a virtuous life. We have sometimes to charge him also with a certain adulteration of the Christian moral principles, by the admixture of a portion of the worldly spirit. As a friend to Christianity, he wished her to be a little less harsh and peculiar than in her earlier days, and to show that she had

not lived so long in the genteelest world in the creation, without learning politeness. Especially it was necessary for her to exercise due complaisance when she attended *him*, if she felt any concern about his reputation, as a companion of the fashionable, the skeptical, the learned, and the affluent, and a preacher to the most splendid congregation in the whole country. It would seem that she meekly took these delicate hints, and adopted a language which no gentleman could be ashamed to repeat, or offended to hear. The sermons abound with specimens of this improved dialect. . . . . .

"This doubtful and accommodating quality was one of the chief causes, we apprehend, of the first extraordinary popularity of these sermons. A great many people of gaiety, rank, and fashion have occasionally a feeling that a little easy quantity of religion would be a good thing; because it is too true, after all, that we cannot be staying in this world always, and when one goes out of it, why, there may be some hardish matters to settle in the other place. The prayer-book of a Sunday is a good deal, to be sure, toward making all safe, but then it is really so tiresome; for penance it is very well, but to say one likes it, one cannot for the life of one. If there were some tolerable religious thing that one could read now and then without trouble, and think it about half as pleasant as a game of cards, it would be comfortable. One should not be so frightened about what we must all come to some time. — Now nothing could have been more to the purpose than these sermons; they were welcomed as the very thing. They were unquestionably about religion, and grave enough in all conscience; yet they were elegant; they were so easy to comprehend throughout, that the mind was never detained a moment to think; they were undefiled by methodism; they but little obtruded peculiar doctrinal notions; they applied very much to high life, and the author was evidently a gentleman; the book could be discussed as a matter of taste, and its being seen in the parlour excited no surmise that any one in the house had been lately converted. Above all, it was most perfectly free from that disagreeable and mischievous property attributed to the eloquence of Pericles, that it 'left stings behind.'" — pp. 281 – 283.

The second of the books before us was, we apprehend, a mere bookseller's enterprise for coining money by a title-page with an attractive name. It is a publication which the author, when living, could not have tolerated, and to which none of his judicious friends can have given countenance. It consists of imperfect and broken sketches of a course of

miscellaneous lectures on subjects of practical morality and religion, which he never wrote out, but delivered from very copious suggestive notes. The present text, as we infer from the editor's confused and clumsy preface, was created by fusing together the notes taken of the lectures by some admiring hearer, and the author's own manuscripts. The consequence is, that we have in almost every lecture such luminous paragraphs as the following : —

" For instance, it might be a beneficial thing to have certain specified subjects, of serious interest, to turn to, when thought is beginning to be dissipated into these vanities ; certain subjects might be selected and fixed expressly for this purpose. This might be something *nearer*, as it were, to serve to the purpose, than the merely being sensible that there *are* many important subjects to which I *might* turn my attention. There is a grand assemblage to select from. What a reflection here on the folly and guilt of an indulged vanity of thought! General important truth offers many : choose any one. The memory of matters of fact. Suppose the recollection of a perilous situation and providential interposition. Or the remembrance of a dying scene. There is possibly in the room the picture of a dead friend. Conscience offers subjects of thought; for example, the record of what a man judges to have been his *greatest sin !* If turning his mind to meet *this* dark aspect will not check and suspend the vain career, should he not be alarmed at such a power as the vanity has over his mind ? Should not even this very alarm be strong enough to produce the desired effect ? " — p. 123.

In fact, every page of this book declares it the absolutely unfinished work of a man whose last finishing touch could make his soundest thoughts no more than readable. And the editorial details seem to have been conducted in the most slovenly manner. Many of the titles to the Lectures are too inappropriate and undescriptive to have been given them even by an author as infelicitous in titles as Foster was prone to be ; nor is there even that decent heed to grammar and punctuation which might have been expected from an intelligent proof-reader. And we take this opportunity to record our emphatic protest against the posthumous publication of every distinguished man's waste-paper. It can, indeed, be had of partial friends for the asking ; and a credulous and greedy public will snatch at it for the name it bears. But it does atrocious wrong to the memory of the deceased ; and, what is worse, it often gives the authority of his name for

opinions which he had outgrown, for theories which he had abandoned, and for the merest crudities which he forgot to burn. Foster probably did not deem these lectures worth preparing for the public eye; for they were delivered more than twenty years ago, in the prime of his vigor both of body and mind. Some of them were evidently thrown together on the day before they were delivered, with no definite purpose but that of meeting the appointment and filling the hour; some of them, however, we wish that he had finished, especially the three on "Noah and the Deluge," the "Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah," and "Elijah's Sacrifice." In these rough, but graphic sketches, his own stern, lofty soul towers up in sublime sympathy with the wild and terrific scenes of flood and fire, and with the unearthly majesty of the prophet on Mount Carmel. The following extract from the last of the three will furnish a specimen, not indeed of the lectures as we have them (for it shows more elaboration than any other passage which we can find), but of the author's usual style and manner on a subject peculiarly accordant with his taste and genius.

"It was proper that the idolaters should make the experiment first, and most ample time was given them. Some delay of their success might even have been of service to their cause. Contemplate this immense legion of priests calling on Baal, before the waiting, gazing multitude! — Behold a sample of that human reason which has *itself* been idolized, — solemnly, perseveringly, furiously, invoking — a nonentity — a vain creation of fancy — and fashioned by that fancy in the most hateful character! Baal and Baalim are very indefinite denominations, being given to a great diversity of pagan deities. It is supposed that the chief Baal of Palestine was nearly the same as the Jupiter of the Greeks and Romans; but with a confused participation of the attributes of divers divinities. In the instance before us he seems to have been worshipped without an image. This assemblage of priests most likely adored a variety of gods in this one comprehensive service. The priests of 'the groves' united, though named as a distinct class. 'They called, from morning till noon;' but no answer; no sign; no flash of electric fire; no demon's invisible torch permitted! For though there was no Baal there, to hear the conjuration, we can easily imagine there were hovering there, unseen, agents who would soon have lighted the flame, if not restrained by superior power. Such aid would not have been wanting as that which was per-

mitted for a while to the magicians of Egypt. But *this* time, those agents were to look on, and forbear! The people also looked on, — with intense interest! There were Israëlites waiting to see *who* was their God! Some of those beguiled sinners would wonder at Baal's delay. Some would feel doubt coming on their minds, and some would begin to feel scorn. Elijah, too, long looked on; he could give them time. He knew he should want little himself. Let all their gods be invoked, by all their names and titles! Let all their incantations be expended! Let their last tribute of idolatrous zeal be fully paid! Let the deluded miserable populace see how tenacious their spiritual tyrants were of their enslaved souls!

"It was in silence that the prophet had thus long looked on. When he *did* speak, what would you have him to have said? a gentle dissuasion? — *that* would have been no fit language to the insulters of the Almighty, and the destroyers of the people! — a loud denunciation of vengeance? — *that* was to be executed, and needed not be spoken. 'It came to pass that Elijah mocked.' We are not to imagine this as said in a light, bantering tone of pleasantry; as if the prophet would *amuse* himself with their unsuccessful impiety; but as an austere and bitter rebuke in the form of sarcasm, and it had in it a propriety and truth, without which sarcasm and ridicule have no point. Some such thing as he in mockery suggests was to be supposed by them to account for their failure. 'He is a god,' 'as you assume, — and favorable to you. There must therefore be some occasional cause of this his inattention. Is he not talking, pursuing, on a journey, or asleep?' Now this was quite pertinent, because the heathens did suppose such things might happen, to prevent the gods hearing them. Le Clerc illustrates from Homer — Jupiter had a bed, and sometimes went to sleep — Thetis could not obtain a desired boon from Jupiter, because he was gone on a journey to Ethiopia, and was not to return for twelve days. Baal's worshippers were not less gross in their notions; and therefore such things were *justly* thrown in their teeth. Will any one say this was too harsh, and almost cruel, when Elijah saw the wretched men thus laboring in vain? What! in the land of Israel? — among a people perishing under the effects of the abominations which these men had promoted among them? What! after these wicked men had doubtless abetted Jezebel in killing all the teachers of the true religion that could be found?

"After hours of vain invocation, they had recourse to their most wild and barbarous rites; leapt upon the altar — cut themselves. Now, this was no newly invented expedient of theirs,

prompted by despair. These were customary rites in the worship of several heathen deities. It was like a judicial doom, that those who would worship false gods should do it at the cost of plaguing and torturing themselves. Miserably exhausted many of these priests must have become, but the *will* was resolute, inflexible, and invincible; they went on till near the time of the Jewish 'evening sacrifice.' Still no voice, — no auspicious sign, — no fire. The great assembly that witnessed this long process had to make their reflections. The great majority had to reflect that *these* were the personages to whom they had long surrendered their judgments, their consciences, and the religion of the God of Israel; that these had been their accepted intercessors with invisible power. They had to consider in what degree themselves might be involved in the consequences which now would seem to impend. It was too much to hope that justice would entirely dissever the retribution." — pp. 221 – 224.

John Foster was the contemporary, associate, and friend of Robert Hall. Ornaments of the same denomination, preachers in the same chapel, writers for the same public, they are naturally brought into comparison with each other. Hall was the most eloquent writer; Foster the most cogent reasoner. The one was mighty in persuading men to act as they believed, and in dressing up the merest commonplaces of truth and duty with glowing words from a fervent heart; the other loved to run athwart men's settled judgments and opinions, and never went his way so rejoicingly as when loaded down with paradoxes. The mind of the one teemed with beauty, and his heart with love; while the other's tenderest emotions were acts of ratiocination. The two were as unlike as law and gospel; and, had they occupied rival pulpits, the competition would have been between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. Each was needed in his place and for his work; and they both wrought for truth and man with conscientious fidelity. Both have left honored names and a luminous track where they disappeared. Would to God that the championship of the most sacred interests of our race might ever fall to equally valiant hands and loyal hearts!